[R. E. Ludwig]

1

Folkstuff - Rangelore

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 [101?]

Page #1

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R.E. Ludwig, 74, was born Feb. 14, 1864, in Ft. Worth, Tex. An orphan at five, he was wholly dependent on his relatives for sustenance. At eight, one of his chores was pasturing milk cows for his neighborhood. At 10, Jim Ellis, another relative, used him on the Ellis Ranch, loc. near Ft. Worth. At 15, Tom Bays, another relative, employed him on the Bays Ranch at Big Springs, Tex. 11 Mos. later, Col Godwin employed him on the CT Ranch at Markel, Tex. He returned to Ft. Worth in 1882, to enter the building trades. From time to time, he rode bucking horses for pleasure but never returned to the range until he made his last roundup in 1928. His age forced his retirement from all activities in 1930, and he now resides at 2711 Loving Ave. Ft. Worth, Tex. His story:

“Don't make no mistake now, because I don't believe in this what's going to happen's going to happen, but just the other night here, wife and I was a-settin' here in front of the fire, and I was trying to recall names, brands, and so on that I knew when I was a cow poke. It's a darn shame, but I can't recall hardly any names and you know, I've known a

hundred men in my time that could ride anything these cow hands of today can't even look at. It's a fact.

“We had different hosses in them days. We had them old Mustangs. Wild scoundrels that'd pitch every morning like they done the first time they was ever rode. If a man made it for three months on a ranch, he was good for the rest of the time because he could ride! Yes sir! He could really ride!

“To start with, times was different altogether then then now. I was born Feb. 14th, 1864. Just another valentine, you know. Ha! Ha! I sure look like a valentine, don't I. I was born right here in Fort Worth, and my mother died when I was two, my dad when I was five. C12 - [?] 2 That gave me an early start. An orphan at five. However, this so-called 'milk of human kindness' had a higher butter fat content in them days, and my kin folks took me in.

“Them days, kids didn't run around all over creation but was taught to work. Soon's they was able to do a job, it was give to 'em. I toted in wood, gathered kindling, toted water from the well, and so on, 'til I was about six when my Uncle'd set me on a hoss, and hold me there, 'til I learned to ride one. It wasn't long then, 'til I was driving their milk cows, they had three or four all the time, out to the pasture, then going and bringing 'em back to the barn at night.

“The next step was taking all the neighbor's cows out as I went. I reckon I had from 20 to 30 at times. Stirring times then, too. Several times when I was out to the pasture with them cows, I'd see Indians on the go with a bunch of whites behind 'em. 'Bout the only good Indians I ever saw, was dead ones.

“Why, some more kin folks I had, I had a good many, that lived on a farm a little piece out from Weatherford, by the name of Rippey, was killed by the Indians 'long about the time I was seven or eight. The way I heard it, the family was settin' around the fire one night, and we kids was parching field corn. The old folks got to talking about how the Indians was seen coming to this place, and the old man and woman run out into the yard with guns.

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They killed four-five Indians, I think, but the Indians killed them. The men-folks said that if they'd stayed in the house and shot from windows or something, that 3 the Indians'd been afraid to tackle the place. Instead, they run out and the Indians got them.

“While the shooting was going an outside, a 12 year old orphan boy they were keeping, took a quilt and put it in front of the fireplace. Then he took their four year old daughter and they both got behind this quilt. After the Indians finished the old folks off, they come in into the cabin, which was two rooms, a kitchen and bed room, and went on into the kitchen. The woman'd been making lard on the stove in a big kittle. The Indians turned this over and went to breaking everything up.

“While the Indians were in the kitchen, this boy took the girl and run out through the corn field that was close by the cabin. I never seen the boy or girl, but I heared they both lived to a pretty good old age and died in bed.

“Lots-a nights while sitting around the fire, the old folks'd talk about the Indians and what they'd do. I've heared them tell how that a cabin'd be closed and they'd be afraid to tackle the place but they'd wait for the moon to come up, and roundup what hossestock there was on the place. You know, when there were Indians around in Indian times, folks'd take their stock and hide it in a field or someplace. Yes sir! Them were stirring times.

“I got to be a pretty good hand with cattle when I was 10, and Jim Elli Ellis , an Uncle of mine, put me out on his ranch about five miles from town. He didn't own the land but his Uncle, another Jim Ellis, the one that put up one of the first banks in town, a private bank, owned the land. 4 “Jim bought and sold. He didn't raise his own stock a-tall. He'd have from 50 to 60, to from seven to 800 head at a time on the place. While I don't recall the iron his stuff carried when he bought it unbranded, it was something or other and I learned to cut and brand right on his place. I learned enough about working stock 'til a brother-in-law on mine took me out to his place when I wasn't but 15 and put me to punching his stock.

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“His name was Tom Bays, and his ranch was near Big Springs, Texas. I reckon he run around 1,000 head in his 'TB Connected' iron. You make that like this: . He hired three men besides myself, and we all pitched in with all the other ranchers from round about on roundups.

“There was a sight of cow punchers sent out from head quarters with instructions to haze every critter they set eyes on, right into the general herd. Every ranch also sent a chuck wagon, and there was a sight when meal time come and the wagons hadn't got started out yet. Of course, the chuck wasn't anything to start a racket over. Beans, bacon, bread, prunes, and black coffee, beef once in awhile, and dry beef anytime you wanted it. We all carried dry beef in our saddle pockets so's when we got out away from the chuck wagon and couldn't come in, the dry beef, or jerk as we called it, would carry us over 'til we could get in at the next meal. The way they made jerk was to run a rope from tree to tree. hang the meat up and let it dry. You never seen a green fly in that country then, and that was a nice way to do the beef you wanted for jerk.

“We had a stampede that was a dilly on the first spring roundup ever I made like they done out there. I reckon we had 5 a little over 1,000 head of mixed stuff rounded up on Geronimo Flats, and there come up the gosh-awfullest storm ever I seen. Well, we knowed the storm was a coming because our hosses and the stock kept getting jittery as the devil. When the wind hit us, the stock started drifting and try as we did, we couldn't keep them from drifting. We finally all got out in front and kept our hosses right in front of the leaders to slow them down, and that slowed the whole herd down. Then, and nobody ever knowed what scared that herd, the cattle started stampeding. If we all hadn't have been right out in front, there wouldn't have been so much trouble but whatever scared the cattle, happened in behind and they snorted and started to running. Naturally the front ones got scared of something behind them, and they started. Now this all happened quicker'n it takes to tell it, and then cattle were right on us before we realized there was a stampede on. What we done, was to bunch together, and the herd passed around us. That too, was quite a trick to

turn and was almost not turned. If any of us had gone down while working to get together, we'd have been stomped right into the ground.

“Them critters acted like the wildest ones I ever did see. It took us about a week to roundup them up again, and we never did get some of them. They just got completely away, but must have been took in on some other roundup a year or so later. I don't know about that.

“When I was there about five months, Tom sold a few head of beef, then moved the rest to Menard where he set up another ranch. Then we went to Lampassas where he bought 600 head of stockers, and we drove them back to Menard. 6 “It wasn't but about 100 miles from Lampassas, but I reckon it took us 10 days to drive that herd to Menard. You see, unless the drovers are pushing on for water, they hardly ever make over 10 miles a day. Many a trail driver that's told me that and all about going up the trail to Abilene, Kansas. Or, to the other market places and, to Northern ranges where they'd fatten the stock before shipping on into market.

“About six months after we come back on that trail drive, I got a chance to go to work for Finley, who ran around 8,000 head in the 'JF Connected' iron, made like this: . I helped make one roundup but wasn't ever satisfied with his place exactly, so after about five months, I went to Merkel Texas, and hired out to old Col. Godwin. He and his son ran around 2,000 head in his 'C Bar T' iron. You make that like this: C-T.

“Not that I had anything against Finley because I didn't. I just didn't cotton to his spread like I did the C Bar T. They had a bunch of regular fellows around there, and the Col. wouldn't hire anything but top hands. That was what I liked. I never did like to work around people that couldn't do what they set out to do. Edgar Boaz was the foreman, and there were a couple of other cow pokes by the name of Willie Wilkerson and Pete Boaz who could really ride and rope with about the best in the country, not barring anybody.

“While everybody's cattle still run loose at that time, The Col. had a section under fence for a hoss pasture, and they run their roundups in June and October.

“There was another pretty big rancher that run a spread about six miles S. of Merkel. You see, the Col.'s was about four 7 Mi. N. of Merkel. When ever any of the ranchers wanted something herd to do, done during a roundup, they either called on one of the Y Bar Y's men, that was the other big rancher's brand, Doc Grounds was his name, or they called on one of the C Bar T's men.

“I worked on the C Bar T for three years, and got a lot of experience with wild hosses there. You see, we didn't have any certain one hoss to ride, but we all had from six to eight hosses in our string and we tried to even the work up among them to where they'd last us. And, they were the orneriest rascals ever you set eyes on. In fact, I don't believe you ever saw anything so mean as these rascals were. They'd pitch every morning as if they'd never been broke for five or 10 minutes. Oh, it was a rough old life but I lived it. Many's the night I've gone to sleep with the stars a-shining bright and not a cloud in the sky, to wake up with 18 inches of snow on the ground. Any man that was any account had a good bed roll and a tarp, but he couldn't keep snakes out. I rolled over on once, and it bit me right here under my right arm.

“These hosses I spoke of, I said they'd pitch, and they would. They didn't all pitch the same way, either. They had different ways of pitching, and we had the different ways named. Now there was the fence row where they'd pitch from side to side, and that's hard on the rider because the hoss hits the ground with his feet bunched and hard.

“Then, there's the way they can jump up in the air and turn around. If you stay on one of them, you're a good rider. I once went out from Fort Worth after I quite the range, to a friend of mine's place. He had a hoss and asked me to ride him. I got into the hull, and that rascal started that from side to side 8 I kept looking for a place to light, but everywhere I

looked, I saw a big rock so I stayed in the saddle 'til I pitched that hoss down. My friend's name was John L. Jackson, and his place was 12 Mi. N. of Weatherford in Parker Co.

“After about three years on the C Bar T, I left the range 'til here about eight years ago when a friend of mine with a little money to invest, put it in stock. When I left the range, I came right into Fort Worth and went into other ways of making a living but rode a hoss once in awhile to keep my hand in. That away, when Bill McCostin bought 150 head of white faces from a ranch located just six miles S. of Decatur.

“I went up there one Monday morning and fence cornered 35 head, then loaded them into a cattle car by myself. How many of these ranch hands of today can do that? I done that every day 'til the last head was cut out and loaded. Why, they had cow punchers as were cow punchers in my day and time.

“Just to give you an example in the difference of the times, I was down to the Stock Yards here the other day and seen a Stock Yards bronc buster get on a hoss to ride him. He had to have two other fellows help him, and there he had as tight a corral as every anybody needed to do it by themselves. In my day, we caught wild hosses right out on the prairie and rode them right there. When we didn't ride them, we more than likely lost that hoss 'til we could catch him again. Now this hoss this fellow got on, why, a kid could have rode him. He just bowed his back and made about four jumps, then quit. Them ornery Mustangs we rode'd pitch for three to [400?] yards, and from 15 to 45 minutes. That was concentrated life when you slapped your hull on a wild one and stayed with it 'til that booger squalled and quit his devilishness.